

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com**SciVerse ScienceDirect**

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 78 (2013) 21 – 25

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

PSIWORLD 2012

Marital Status and Work-Life Balance

Georgeta Panisoara^{a*}, Mihaela Serban^a^a*University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, Panduri street, 061071, Bucharest, Romania*

Abstract

In an increasingly busy and hectic society downsizing can either lead to more time and effort dedicated to profession in order to keep the current position or less involvement in work in favour of personal life, thus leaving the possibility to have a job to chance. This study examined whether marital status has an impact on work-life balance so that the organizations can conceive and implement proper motivational policies. The findings show that the four categories of employees included in the research (unmarried, married without children, married with children under 18, married with children over 18) do not have a significantly different level of work-life balance. New insights into the relationship between marital status and work-life balance are provided.

© 2013 The Authors. Published by Elsevier B.V. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of PSIWORLD 2012

Keywords: marital status; work-life balance; quality time dedicated to family; motivational policies;

1. Introduction

In today's society the idea of managing a stressful job and also dedicating quality time to family is definitely becoming a major challenge. More and more women have managerial jobs. Even so, they want to have happy private lives as well and do their best in order to succeed in both domains of life: professional and personal.

Even if it has been predominantly viewed as women's problem, especially of those who are in corporate employment and have family obligations (Parasuraman and Simmers, 2001; Hardy and Adnett, 2002; Felstead et al., 2002), work-life balance represents an issue of prime concern for working men too. Data suggests that in the families where childcare is shared men are likely to experience similar levels of work-life conflict as women (Duxbury and Higgins, 2008).

According to Duxbury and Higgins (2008), a large body of research links the parental responsibilities of working couples to the incidence of work-family conflict. Because they have more demands and less control over

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: gpanisoara@yahoo.com

their time, parents seem to encounter more difficulties in balancing work and non-work activities than non-parents. Similar results are reported by Galinsky, Bond and Friedman (1996). They found that parent employees exhibit significantly higher levels of conflict between work and family/personal life than non-parents. The transition to parenthood appears to be a period characterized by an increased level of stress (Owen and Cox, 1988), in which significant changes in the couple's relationship, responsibilities and preoccupations take place (Belsky and Pensky, 1988; Levy-Shiff, 1994; Feldman, 2000).

The way women and men juggle their paid work with their household and caring responsibilities is a topic that requires even more attention when considering the negative consequences of work-family conflict.

As previous studies indicate, work-related effects include job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, turnover intention and stress (Anderson, Coffey and Byerly, 2002). A high level of work-family conflict seems to be correlated with a low organizational commitment as well (O'Driscoll, Ilgen and Hildreth, 1992).

With regard to family-related effects, the findings show that work-family conflict leads to a decrease in family satisfaction (Frone, Barnes and Farrell, 1994; Aryee et al., 1999; Burke and Greenglass, 1999; Carlson and Kacmar, 2000), parental overload, delays and absenteeism in family, a poor performance in family roles and a lack of family member support (Adams et al., 1996; Frone, Yardley and Markel, 1997).

European documents speak often about supporting employees to reconcile work and family life. Family-friendly programmes are well-known and implemented in western societies. Yet, they fail to be understood by local organizations in Eastern Europe. As data suggests, a rigid organizational culture, focused mainly on performance and disregarding employees' needs can create a stressful climate which in turn constitutes a determinant for a high conflict between quality family time and job performance (Aryee, 1992).

There is no doubt that the employers play a major role in managing this conflict and creating a family-friendly organizational culture which promotes flexible work schedules, access to chreches, kindergartens or after-school and career management programmes would prove to be a useful solution. Yet, in order to lead to positive results this kind of measures should be addressed to a wider variety of employees.

Balancing work and non-work demands is an issue that pertains to all individuals who are in paid work, regardless of whether they have family responsibilities or not (Dex and Scheibl, 2001; Fu and Shaffer, 2001; Rotondo et al., 2003). It becomes clear that the employees who live within a family structure that does not include children (Waumsley, Houston and Marks, 2010) or those who are not married yet (Association of Graduate Recruiters, 2008) can experience a low level of work-life balance too and need to be taken into consideration when conceiving and implementing initiatives that promote flexibility in the workplace.

In order to reduce inequity, the differences between all these categories of employed persons (unmarried, married without children, married with -minor or major- children) in terms of work-life balance were addressed in this study. Thus the extent to which each one of them needs to benefit from work-life balance programmes could be identified.

2. Methodology

2.1. Objective

The aim of the present study was to examine the impact of marital status on work-life balance.

2.2. Hypotheses

The study was based on the following general hypothesis: Employees' level of work-life balance varies depending on their marital status.

Therefore the following operational hypotheses were formulated:

- Hypothesis 1: Unmarried employees have a significantly higher level of work-life balance than married employees (without children, with children under 18, with children over 18);
- Hypothesis 2: Married employees without children have a significantly higher level of work-life balance than married employees with children over 18;
- Hypothesis 3: Married employees with children over 18 have a significantly higher level of work-life balance than married employees with children under 18.

2.3. Participants

The total number of study participants was 132. They formed four different groups, each group being made up of employees with a distinct marital status: unmarried (N=33), married without children (N=32), married with children under 18 (N=35), married with children over 18 (N=32).

In order to take part in the study, the subjects had to have a job and pertain to one of these four categories. Recently unemployed persons and those who were divorced, widowed, had both minor and major children, or married children were not included.

A non-random convenience sampling was used.

2.4. Instrument

The level of work-life balance was measured with the Romanian version of Work Life Balance Scale reported by Jeremy Hayman (2005).

The scale consists of 15 items, divided into three factors: work interference with personal life (for example, "Neglect personal needs because of work"), personal life interference with work (for example, "Hard to work because of personal matters"), work/personal life enhancement (for example, "Job gives me energy to pursue personal activities", "Better mood at work because of personal life").

The responses were given using a seven point time related scale (for example, 1=Not at all, 4=Sometimes, 7=All the time).

The resulting values of Cronbach Alpha for the three factors of the questionnaire were: 0.73 for factor 1, 0.78 for factor 2 and 0.76 for factor 3.

Using a non-random convenience sampling, the scale was administered to a group of 40 subjects (working people). Among them, 27.5% were men and 72.5% were women). The average age was 43.4 for men and 33.5 for women.

2.5. Procedure

Study data was obtained by a questionnaire (Work Life Balance Scale). Prior to the administration of the survey instrument in order to test the research hypothesis, the Romanian translation of the scale was performed and the psychometric characteristics were established. Since acceptable reliability values were obtained, the instrument was distributed to the available participants in person or by email after receiving their consent.

3. Results

Data provided by participants was processed with the SPSS program, version 17.0. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics.

The results obtained after performing the Kruskal-Wallis test are presented in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 1. Descriptives

	marital status	median	minimum	maximum	range
level of work-life balance	unmarried employees	45.00	30	67	37
	married without children employees	46.50	20	62	42
	married with children under 18 employees	42.00	20	62	42
	married with children over 18 employees	43.50	31	66	35

Table 2. Ranks

	marital status	N	mean rank
level of work-life balance	unmarried employees	33	69.71
	married without children employees	32	68.11
	married with children under 18 employees	35	60.91
	married with children over 18 employees	32	67.69
	Total	132	

Table 3. Test Statistics

	level of work-life balance	df	asyp. sig.
chi-square	1.069	3	.785

Grouping Variable: marital status

Data indicates an invalidation of the research hypothesis ($p > 0.05$). It appears that the four categories of employees included in the study (unmarried, married without children, married with children under 18, married with children over 18) do not have a significantly different level of work-life balance.

These findings may be explained by the fact the state of being a married employee, the presence or the age of the children as part of the marital system do not represent strong enough aspects so as to determine significant differences between these four samples concerning the level of work-life balance.

Varying non-work related issues (by means of the presence of a husband/wife, a minor or major child) while keeping the work constant (by means of the state of being an employed person common for all the four groups of participants) may suggest that the diversification of demands brought about by the necessity to assume household or childcare responsibilities is not necessarily followed by a significant change in the level of work-life balance experienced as unmarried employee.

It seems that the undiminished participation of women in the workforce, which has led to an increase in the number of dual earner couples and to a high involvement of men in family responsibilities, does not represent a threat to a balanced life. Having a job and a family life appears to be possible without experiencing a very different level of balance. It becomes clear that sacrifices like not getting married or not having children are not a price worth paying.

The results of this study are not consistent with previous research findings, which report that parent employees experience a higher level of work-family conflict than non-parents employees.

The access to a different perspective may have been facilitated by the inclusion of a wide variety of employees (unmarried, married without children, married with minor children, married with major children) in the same study. Thus the issue of work-life balance was not considered a matter of utmost importance only for one of these categories, but a major concern for each one of them.

4. Conclusions

The present study provides new information with regard to the relationship between marital status and work-life balance. Apart from the theoretical implications, these findings have practical relevance not only for

employees, but also for employers. Becoming aware of these issues, the unmarried employees will no longer be afraid to start a marriage, especially in their early career. At the same time, the married working couples will no longer avoid having children, thinking that such a decision will have a negative effect on their career. The companies will stop acting in favour of parent employees by introducing programmes that promote work-life balance and will start treating unmarried, married without children or married with children employees equally.

References

- Adams, G. A., King, L. A., & King, D. W. (1996). Relationships of job and family involvement, family social support, and work-family conflict with job and life satisfaction. *Journal of applied psychology*, 81(4), 411–420.
- Anderson, S. E., Coffey, B. S., & Byerly, R. (2002). Formal Organizational Initiatives and Informal Workplace Practices: Links to Work-Family Conflict and Job-Related Outcomes. *Journal of management*, 28(6), 787–810.
- Aryee, S. (1992). Antecedents and outcomes of work-family conflict among married professional women: Evidence from Singapore. *Human relations*, 45(8), 813–837.
- Aryee, S., Luk, V., Leung, A., & Lo, S. (1999). Role Stressors, Interrole Conflict, and Well-Being: The Moderating Influence of Spousal Support and Coping Behaviors among Employed Parents in Hong Kong. *Journal of vocational behavior*, 54(2), 259–278.
- Association of Graduate Recruiters. (2008). Graduate recruitment: Work-life balance matters to graduate recruits. UK: Centaur Communications.
- Belsky, J., & Pensky, E. (1988). Marital change across the transition to parenthood. *Marriage and family review*, 12, 133–156.
- Carlson, D., & Kacmar, K. (2000). Work-Family Conflict in the Organization: Do Life Role Values make a Difference? *Journal of management*, 26(5), 1031–1054.
- Dex, S., & Scheibl, F. (2001). Flexible and family-friendly working arrangements in UK-based SMEs': business cases. *British journal of industrial relations*, 39(3), 411–31.
- Duxbury, L., & Higgins, C. (2008). Work-Life balance in australia in the new millennium: Rhetoric versus reality. Retrieved from http://www.beatonglobal.com/pdfs/Work-life_balance_full_report.pdf
- Feldman, R. (2000). Parents' convergence on sharing and marital satisfaction, father involvement, and parent-child relationship at the transition to parenthood. *Infant mental health journal*, 21, 176–191.
- Felstead, A., Jewson, N., Phizacklea, A., & Walter, S. (2002). Opportunities to work at home in the context of work-life balance. *Human resource management journal*, 12, 54–76.
- Frone, M. R., Barnes, G. M., & Farrell, M. P. (1994). Relationship of work-family conflict to substance use among employed mothers: The role of negative affect. *Journal of marriage and the family*, 56(4), 1019–1030.
- Frone, M. R., Yardley, J. K., & Markel, K. S. (1997). Developing and testing and integrative model of the work-family interface. *Journal of vocational behavior*, 50, 145–167.
- Fu, C. K., & Shaffer, M. A. (2001). The tug of work and family. *Personnel review*, 30(5), 502–22.
- Galinsky, E., Bond, J. T., & Friedman, D. E. (1996). The role of employers in addressing the needs of employed parents. *Journal of social issues*, 52(3), 111–136.
- Hardy, S., & Adnett, N. (2002). The parental leave directive: towards a 'family-friendly' social Europe?. *European journal of industrial relations*, 8, 157–72.
- Hayman, J. (2005). Psychometric assessment of an Instrument Designed to Measure Work Life Balance. *Research and practice in human resource management*, 13(1), 85–91.
- Levy-Shiff, R. (1994). Individual and contextual correlates of marital change across the transition to parenthood. *Developmental psychology*, 30, 591–601.
- O'Driscoll, M. P., Ilgen, D. R., & Hildreth, K. (1992). Time devoted to job and off-job activities, interrole conflict, and affective experiences. *Journal of applied psychology*, 77(3), 272–279.
- Owen, M.T., & Cox, M.J. (1988). Maternal employment and the transition to parenthood. In: Gottfried, A.E., & Gottfried, A.W. (1988). *Maternal employment and children's development: Longitudinal research* (pp. 85–119). New York: Plenum.
- Parasuraman, S., & Simmers, C.A. (2001). Type of employment, work-family conflict and well-being: a comparative study. *Journal of organizational behavior*, 22, 551–68.
- Rotondo, D. M., Carlson, D. S., & Kincaid, J. F. (2003). Coping with multiple dimensions of work-family conflict. *Personnel review*, 32(3), 275–96.
- Waumsley, J., Houston, D., & Marks, G. (2010). What about Us? Measuring the Work-Life Balance of People Who Do Not Have Children. *Review of european studies*, 2(2), 3–17.